ASPECTS OF TIME IN ROBERT SCHUMANN'S *SECHS FUGEN ÜBER DEN NAMEN BACH*, OP. 60

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A Doctoral Essay

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Music

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

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By

Patrick Parker

May, 2016

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This essay examines three aspects of time sometimes misunderstood by organists interpreting Robert Schumann's *Sechs Fugen über den Namen Bach* ("Six Fugues on the Name Bach"), Op. 60: tempo, rubato, and large-scale tempo modification. The document focuses on each aspect separately by quoting appropriate primary written sources and applying that information directly to musical excerpts from the *Six Fugues.* Comments and comparisons are also made to recordings by internationally acknowledged organists, pointing out the problems modern organists face in understanding this music.

The first portion of the essay focuses on tempo. The author discusses German tempo markings and their traditional Italian equivalents, tempo relations among movements of Schumann's fugue cycle, how notation informs tempo choices, and the subjective nature of the topic according to the primary written sources. This section then applies information on tempo to specific passages in the fugues and comments on the analyzed recordings.

The second section is devoted to tempo rubato. The author examines rubato in relation to dynamics, crescendos and diminuendos, and structural points in the music. Utilizing comments on rubato made by the Schumann circle, this section identifies and analyzes specific musical passages in which Schumann notated rubato in his *Album for the Young*, Op. 68. This section applies this information to specific passages in the *Six Fugues* and again comments on the analyzed recordings.

The final section of the essay is devoted to an examination of large-scale tempo modifications that Schumann specifically asked for in the first and sixth fugues. These can also be applied to the fourth fugue because of its compositional similarity to the other two movements. The author asserts that Schumann's request for acceleration was a prototype for

similar practices in the music of Liszt and Wagner. The author uses a variety of Wagnerian sources describing large-scale tempo modification, which provides a new, unique analysis and understanding of tempo modifications in Schumann's *Six Fugues.* The new theoretical framework and interpretation are compared to the analyzed recordings.

This essay concludes with a summary of information drawn from the primary sources and applies this information to the fugues. The sources and applications demonstrate how Romantic performance practice has shifted over the last forty years, as is evident in the analyzed recordings. This document provides a new framework for critical analysis and interpretation of tempo, rubato, and large-scale tempo modification as a means of identifying and understanding the evolving status of Romantic performance practice.

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Genesis of the *Six Fugues*

In the last decade of his life, Robert Schumann wrote *Sechs Fugen über den Namen Bach* ("Six Fugues on the Name Bach"), Op. 60. This cycle represents the culmination of various interests of Robert and Clara Schumann: Bach, the pipe organ, counterpoint, and the pedal piano. Prior to his composition of this cycle, Robert had already written two sets of music for organ or pedal piano, the *Six Canons* and *Four Sketches.* These sets were inspired by a pedal piano that Robert and Clara Schumann rented so they could improve their skills at the organ. The Schumanns expressed great interest in the organ in their letters and personal correspondence, and they mentioned various organs, organists, and organ concerts throughout the many years of their marriage.

When the Schumanns moved to Dresden in 1844, Robert met Johann Gottlob Schneider, organist of the court church. Schneider was known for improvising in the style of Bach and for often ending students' lessons by playing a Bach fugue or chorale setting. In *The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms,* Russell Stinson states: "To judge from Schumann's household records, he [Robert] quickly became a good friend of Schneider and whiled away many an hour listening to the virtuoso play his church's magnificent Silbermann. Bach was doubtless standard fare on these visits."[1] It is plausible that Schumann was inspired to write the *Six Fugues on the Name Bach* when he heard his friend play Bach's organ music.

[1] Russell Stinson, *The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 90.

On 7 April 1845, Robert Schumann began drafting the *Six Fugues* as part of an intense year-long study of counterpoint that he and Clara undertook. They called this their *Fugenpassion.* The first two fugues were written in April; the third, fourth, and fifth in September; and finally the sixth in November 1845. On 15 March 1846, Schumann offered the cycle to the Whistling publishing house, predicting that it would survive longer than any of his other works.

There is no evidence to indicate that an official premiere of the cycle took place. While in the Netherlands in 1853, however, the Schumanns met Jan Albertus van Eijken, organist at the Zuiderkerk and organ instructor at Rotterdam Conservatory. He had been an inaugural student at the Leipzig Conservatory and he later studied in Dresden with Schneider. In an 1855 letter to Joseph Joachim, Schumann stated that Eijken "plays splendidly. In Rotterdam I heard him play fugues by Bach as well as BACH fugues … on an organ that was entirely worthy of him."[2]

Introduction

In Robert Schumann's *Sechs Fugen über den Namen Bach*, three central elements of time are often misunderstood by modern performers: tempo, rubato, and large-scale tempo modification. When playing these works, the modern organist might easily depart from historically-informed performance practice. The problem is evident in recordings by several internationally acknowledged musicians: the English organist Kevin Bowyer;[3] Philippe

[2] Stinson, 90.
[3] Robert Schumann, *Works for Organ*, Kevin Bowyer, Nimbus Records NI 5361 (CD), 1993.

Lefebvre,[4] organist of Notre Dame in Paris; the Dutch organist Piet Kee;[5] the German organist Andreas Rothkopf;[6] and the German pedal pianist Martin Schmeding.[7] As this essay addresses tempo, rubato, and large-scale tempo modification in individual movements, it will also refer to these recordings.

The first element of time discussed here is the choice of tempo. In the nineteenth century, tempo was widely acknowledged to be a subjective decision based on the spirit of a piece and numerous other factors, including meter, the tempo term, the note values employed in the piece, the quantity of fast notes in the piece, and the types of figuration in which these notes appear. The second element is rubato. This is an Italian term meaning "stolen time" and may be defined as a disregard for certain notated properties of rhythm and tempo for the sake of expressive performance. The final element is large-scale tempo modification. This refers to accelerandi used in three of the six fugues. In these movements, Schumann asks for a large-scale accelerando and crescendo through the way in which he specifically notates rhythm, and with tempo modifying words at the beginnings of new sections.

This essay will tackle each of these three separate but interdependent elements in its own section. Each section will be divided into three parts. The first will introduce relevant primary sources. The second will apply these to passages in the *Six Fugues.* The last will indicate how the recordings either adhere or depart from the author's conclusions.

Surprisingly little has been written in recent years about the topic of this essay. Russell Stinson's *The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms* was

[4] Robert Schumann, *L'Oeuvre pour orgue,* Philippe Lefebvre, Solstice FYCD023 (CD), 1976.
[5] Robert Schumann, *Piet Kee at the Concertgebouw*, Piet Kee, Chandos CHAN 9188 (CD), 1993.
[6] Robert Schumann, *Sämtliche Werke für Pedalflügel/Orgel,* Andreas Rothkopf, Audite AUDITE 97.411 (CD), 2010.
[7] Robert Schumann, *Pedal Piano Music (Complete),* Martin Schmeding, Ars Produktion ARS 38011 (CD), 2005.

mentioned above. Stinson surveys the impact and influence of Johann Sebastian Bach's organ works on Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, and others. In the chapter on Schumann, Stinson summarizes his relationship to the organ, including organs and organists he knew, as well as the genesis of his compositions for the instrument. Although Stinson's work does not have a direct bearing on the topic of this paper, it provides relevant and useful historical information.

Sandra P. Rosenblum's *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* contains two chapters important to this essay: "Choice of Tempo" and "Flexibility of Rhythm and Tempo." The chapter on tempo bears directly on the first topic of this essay. Rosenblum includes a discussion of tempo choices, basic tempo groups, increasing individualization of tempo, and the metronome. Her chapter on flexibility is relevant to the second topic of the current essay. Rosenblum addresses rhetorical accentuation by agogic means, ritardando and accelerando, sectional changes of mood and tempo, and tempo flexibility or tempo rubato.

The most important secondary source on nineteenth-century performance practice in regard to time is Clive Brown's *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900.* Brown goes into great detail and quotes primary sources on the subjects of tempo and rubato. He does not write about Schumann in particular, nor does he go into detail about the organ. Concerning large-scale tempo modification, he writes almost nothing concerning the type

Schumann employs in the *Six Fugues.* However, articles by José Bowen and Sandra Rosenblum summarize nineteenth-century performance practice for time, including tempo modification used by the German New School;[8]

[8] The New German School was a group of progressive musicians in the mid-nineteenth century, most notably Liszt and Wagner. The New German School was juxtaposed against conservatives like Brahms in the literary "War of the Romantics" to determine the future of music aesthetics. The New German School

these are cited in the section on large-scale tempo modification.

Tempo in the *Six Fugues*

Tempo decisions for any given performance were subjective in the nineteenth-century. It was more important for a performer to bring out the intended spirit of a composition than closely adhere to a particular metronome marking or tempo indication.[9]

Although tempo choice was subjective, it was nonetheless considered to be important. Anton Schindler noted that "when a work by Beethoven had been performed, his first question was always, 'How were the tempi?' Every other consideration seemed to be of secondary importance to him."[10] Richard Wagner was quite outspoken on the choice of tempo; for him, tempo was "the touchstone of the quality of a performance."[11] Wagner asserted that if a performer understood the spirit of the work, the tempo would take care of itself. Wagner stated, "Bach hardly ever gave any tempo indication at all, and in a purely musical sense this is the ideal course. It is as though he were asking 'How else can one who does not understand these figures and feel their character and expression be helped by an Italian tempo indication?'"[12]

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was innovative in: new musical genres (programmatic symphony, symphonic poem, music drama), harmonic language, orchestral technique, and new approaches to large-scale form (motivic transformation, wide-ranging modulation, cyclic unity). These innovations were fueled by poetic ideas.

[9] Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 290.

[10] Anton Schindler, *Beethoven as I Knew Him: A Biography*, trans. Constance S. Jolly and ed. Donald McArdle (London: Faber, 1966), 423.

[11] Richard Wagner, "Über das Dirigieren," *Gesammelte Sckriftert*, vol. 17, 177 (Leipzig, 1869): 167.

[12] Ibid., 177.

Wagner's ideas about tempo choice were influenced by previous German Romantics like Schumann. In the *Six Fugues,* Schumann leaves only general tempo markings, unlike two other sets of pieces for organ or pedal piano that contain metronome indications. Markings in Schumann's other music for organ and other instruments are surprisingly fast by today's performance standards.[13] It seems likely that Schumann preferred a faster tempo than modern performers would initially assume.

Finally, the subjective nature of a tempo choice is influenced by the instrument and acoustic. Adolf Bernhard Marx (1795-1866)—a German composer, theorist, and critic, who was an intimate family friend of the Mendelssohns—observed in the 1830s, "The same piece of music must sometimes be played somewhat faster, sometimes slower, according to the larger or more constricted space in which it is performed, according to the stronger or weaker forces employed, but particularly according to the decision of the moment."[14] In regard to a performance of the *Six Fugues,* an organist might play slower in a reverberant room on a tonally interesting organ, and faster in a drier room on a dull instrument.

Each performer of the selected recordings picked a different tempo for each movement of the *Six Fugues,* conforming to the subjective nature of tempo choice for this repertoire. Perhaps another reason for these discrepancies is that Schumann did not use conventional Italian tempo indications. It is important to understand Schumann's German tempo markings in the *Six Fugues,* how they relate to more traditional Italian markings, and what those Italian markings mean.

[13] Brown, 286.
[14] Ibid., 282-3.

A modern performer might not realize that Schumann's German tempo indications relate to Italian tempo terms, which can refer to mood as much as tempo. Clive Brown states the following about the composers' understanding of these terms:

> as the connotations of meter for tempo weakened during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Italian directions, which began increasingly often to be affixed to the beginning of a piece, became more important for determining tempo. ... With the proliferation of these terms, however, a lack of consensus about their meaning also became apparent. ... A particular problem with these terms is that they served a dual purpose; for composers, especially in the earlier part of the period tended to use them as much to prescribe the appropriate mood or style as to designate the tempo.[15]

Most modern performers know a general progression of terms, such as largo-adagio-andante-allegro-presto. But they may not be aware that slower tempi also relate to sadness or calmness, and quicker ones to joy. Table 1 gives the German terms used by Schumann in his *Six Fugues*, their Italian equivalents, and definitions or comments drawn from both primary and secondary written sources.

[15] Brown, 336.

Table 1. Interpretation of the Tempo Indications in Schumann's *Six Fugues.*

Six Fugues	German Tempo Marking	Equivalent Italian Tempo Marking	Definitions and Metronome Indications According to Selected Primary and Secondary Sources
Fugue 1	*Langsam* *Nach und nach schneller und stärker*	Adagio [little by little faster and stronger]	Corri: Very slow and with a certain gravity of expression.[16] Lussy: He grouped Largo an Adagio together with a suggested metronome range of quarter note=40-60.[17] Quantz: quarter note=30[18]; Türk: quarter note=25[19]; Löhlein: sad.[20]
Fugue 2	*Lebhaft*	Allegro [Vivace]	Lively/sprightly/brisk. Allegro and Vivace were often grouped together in the primary sources. Koch: Quick…the speed of this movement can be quite varied…the performer must still try to determine the exact degree of speed…in part from the meter…in part and mainly, however, from the content itself.[21] C.P.E. Bach: In Berlin "adagio is far slower and allegro far faster than is customary elsewhere."[22] Quantz: quarter note=120; Türk: quarter note=102; Löhlein: merry, lively.
Fugue 3	*Mit sanften Stimmen*	[Sotto voce]	With soft voices. The music implies an Andante tempo.

[16] Domenico Corri, *Select Collection of the Most Admired Songs, Duets, etc. from Operas in the Highest Esteem*, vol. 1 (London: Dussek & Co., 1795), 10.

[17] Mathis Lussy, *Musical Espression,* trans. M.E. von Glehn (London, 1885), 161.

[18] Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute,* trans. Edward R. Reilly (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), 284.

[19]Daniel Gottlob Türk, *On the Role of the Organist in Worship,* trans. Margot Ann Greenlimb Woolard (Landham: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 111-12.

[20] Georg Löhlein, *Anweisung zum Violinspielen* (Leipzig: 1781), 106. Excerpt translated in Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

[21] Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexicon* (Heidelberg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1865), cols. 130-1. Excerpt translated in Rosenblum.

[22] C.P.E. Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments,* trans. William J. Mitchell (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 148.

			Koch: "Andante—Going or walking. Between fast and slow. Deliberateness, calm, contentment. Everything here is moderated."[23] Rosenblum: Andante is not a slow but a walking tempo, the mean between fast and slow. The term was derived from the Italian *andare,* which means "to move," "to go," or "to walk."[24] Busby: "Andante is used to imply a time somewhat slow, and a performance distinct and exact, gentle, tender and soothing."[25] Quantz: quarter note=60; Türk: quarter note=51; Löhlein: calmness.
Fugue 4	*Mässig, doch nicht zu langsam*	Moderato [but not too slow]	Clive Brown states that Moderato did not generally indicate a performance style (*affekt*-wise). The tempo for Moderato was subject to disagreement: composers sometimes designated a slower tempo with this indication; sometimes they used it as a qualifier for Allegro. Quantz: quarter note=80; Türk: quarter note=68; Löhlein: a moderated joy, that has more calmness.
Fugue 5	*Lebhaft*	Allegro [Vivace]	Lively/sprightly/brisk. See comments for Fugue 2 above.
Fugue 6	*Mässig, nach und nach schneller*	Moderato [little by little faster]	See comments for Fugue 4 above.

The importance of the tempo is reflected in Johann Kirnberger's article on "Tempo" in the first edition of Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie:*

> No one but he who has composed a piece is in the position to determine the most appropriate degree of movement for it. A small degree more or less can do much damage to the effect of the piece. Although many words have been devised for this purpose, they are still not sufficient. The tempo could be indicated precisely by actual establishment of the time in which the entire piece should be played.[26]

[23] Koch, cols. 142-3.
[24] Rosenblum, 315.
[25] Tomas Busby, *Complete Dictionary of Music* (London: 1806), Art. "Andante."
[26] Johann Kirnberger, "Bewegung," in *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste,* vol. 1, ed. Johann Georg Sulzer (Leipzig, 1792), 167.

In order to make good tempo choices for the *Six Fugues,* one might consider the thoughts of the German composer Johann Friedrich Schubert (1770-1811), who wrote the following in his treatise *Neue Singe-Schule:*

> The correct tempo or degree of speed cannot be determined by any heading, and can only be gathered from the inner characteristics of a composition itself. So, for instance, an allegro with semiquavers ought not to be performed as quickly as if the fastest passages are only in triplets or quavers. An allegro in church style or in an oratorio must have a slower tempo than an allegro in theatre or chamber style…a well-worked-out allegro with a powerful, full harmony must be performed more slowly than a hastily written allegro with trivial harmony. In an adagio in 3/8 meter the quavers will be performed more slowly than the quavers in the same tempo in 3/4 meter…differences in compositional style or manner and national taste also necessitate a faster or slower tempo.[27]

Schubert's quote leads an inquisitive performer to examine the "inner characteristics" of the *Six Fugues.* In general, the cycle of fugues is contrapuntal, harmonically complex, mostly written in large note values, and most likely intended for reverberant churches and not chamber or concert halls, at least when played on the organ. (These pieces could also be played on the pedal piano, as Schumann's subtitle implies. A performance on that instrument might encourage quicker tempi.) The music was written late in Schumann's life, using counterpoint and a "high" theme—the name of Bach—on a sacred instrument. These factors suggest that more conservative tempo choices might be better for the *Six Fugues* than for other works by Schumann with the same tempo indications.

On the other hand, it seems likely that nineteenth-century German performers preferred faster tempi than modern musicians. In *Performance Practices in Classic Piano*

[27] Johann Friedrich Schubert, *Neue Singe-Schule oder gründliche und vollständige Anweisung zur Singkunst* (Leipzig, 1804); trans. in Brown, 296.

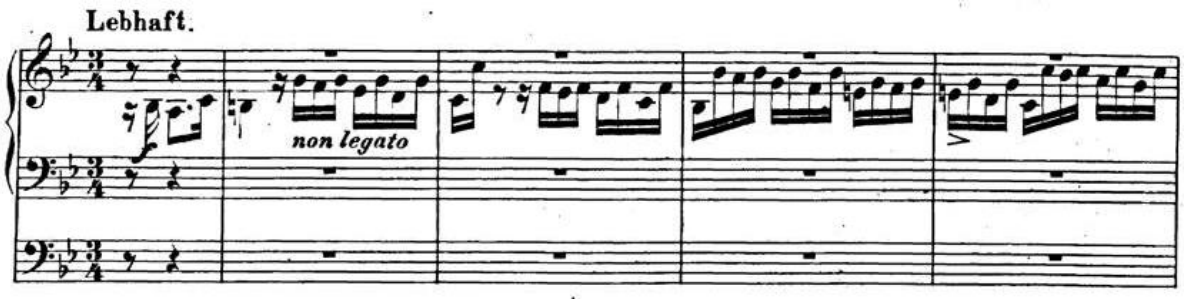
Music, Sandra Rosenblum summarizes trends and statements about tempo in Germany from the late Baroque to the time of Liszt and Wagner. Three excerpts from her discussion are particularly relevant:

> The trend for fast movements to be played increasingly quickly seems to have continued during and after Beethoven's life.[28]
>
> In 1847 Fischhof, who claimed to have observed tempi from 1819, wrote that from the 1820s there had been a tendency for German orchestras to take Beethoven's compositions faster than they were played in Vienna.[29]
>
> Berlioz was astonished at the fast tempi he heard throughout Germany in 1841.[30]

An analysis of the "inner characteristics" of a movement can lead the performer to just the right tempo for a given organ and acoustic. We begin with the second fugue; the first four measures are given as Example 1. The touch is *non legato*; the marking is "lively"; the harmonies are relatively simple; and the general compositional style is not serious. Indeed, this is more of a character piece than a traditional fugue, and it might well be the fastest piece of the cycle. However, the *forte* dynamic marking results in an intensity in organ registration that does not allow for an extremely fast performance.

[28] Rosenblum, 333.
[29] Ibid., 333.
[30] Ibid., 334.

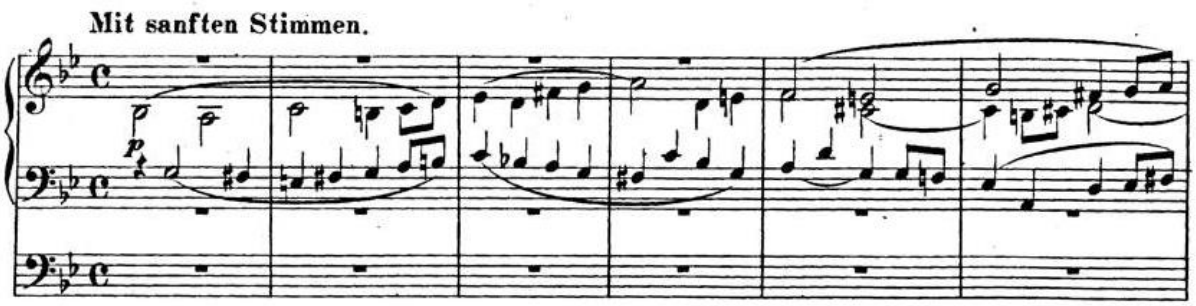
Example 1. Measures 1-4 of Fugue II from the *Six Fugues.*



Bowyer and Rothkopf offer contrasting recordings of the piece. Bowyer's version lacks clarity because it is too quick and heavily registered. He tries to compensate by over-emphasizing the articulation and accents. Rothkopf, on the other hand, plays a little slower, with clearer registration and emphasis on the big pulses rather than every articulation and accent. The result is a lively interpretation, more in the intended spirit of the piece.

The first six measures of the third fugue are given as Example 2. This movement is marked *Mit sanften Stimmen* (with soft voices), which indicates a type of registration rather than a tempo. However, the long slurs, soft dynamic indication, string of suspensions, and complex harmonies, all lead to a *Langsam* performance. By writing long slurs, Schumann implies that the performer should feel a long line in a two-bar pulse. This creates a slow tempo that also has forward-moving energy.

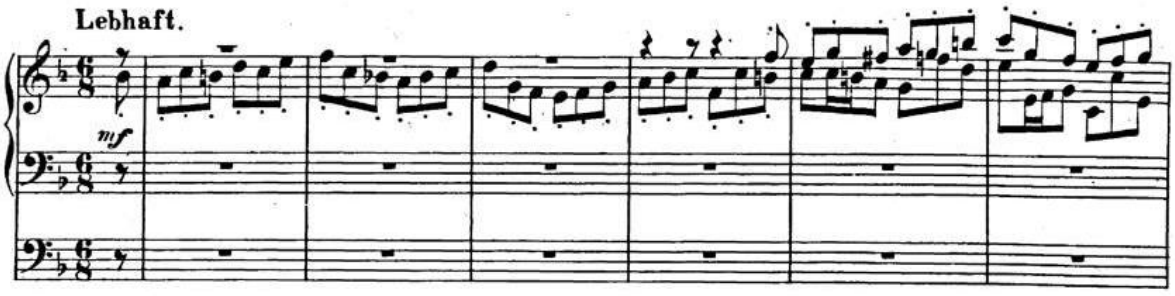
Example 2. Measures 1-4 of Fugue III from the *Six Fugues.*



The tempo of this movement varies the most among the analyzed recordings. Kee plays it extremely slowly. Lefebvre plays it twice as quickly. An ideal tempo probably lies somewhere between the two extremes.

The beginning of the fifth fugue is given as Example 3. Like the second fugue, this is marked *Lebhaft.* This piece can be taken at a brisk tempo because the harmonies are relatively simple, the texture is light, the marking is "lively," the dynamic indication allows for a clear organ registration, and the touch is staccato.

Example 3. Measures 1-4 of Fugue V from the *Six Fugues.*



Lefebvre plays about twice as fast as the Germans Schmeding and Rothkopf. A performance based on the sources given in Table 1 would lie between these extremes. In fact, an

historically-informed performance would use tempo relationships among the movements that are less extreme than those in all the analyzed recordings, closer in each case to *tempo ordinario*.

Proper tempo choices for the *Six Fugues* can highlight the logic of these pieces in relation to each other when considered as a cycle. See Table 2. The first, fourth, and last movements are comparable: they all start slow, soft, dark, and low, and rise throughout the movement to an exalted ending. The second and fifth fugues are the most scherzo-like movements. The third is the calmest, most subdued movement of the cycle. Choosing tempi based on style similarities and differences in the separate movements of the *Six Fugues* can create a unified half-hour cycle that begins with high energy, fades to the third movement, and gains energy leading to a dramatic conclusion.[31]

Table 2. Application of Symphonic Form Conventions to the *Six Fugues* as a Cycle.

Fugue	Tempo Marking	Symphonic Model
I	*Langsam*	Introduction
II	*Lebhaft*	Quasi First-Movement Sonata Form
III	*Mit sanften Stimmen*	Slow Movement
IV	*Mässig, doch nicht zu langsam*	Finale
V	*Lebhaft*	Scherzo
VI	*Mässig, nach und nach schneller*	Coda

[31] An obvious problem with this model is that the scherzo and finale are in the wrong order. It is possible that Schumann was thinking of a symphonic cycle, yet realized that Fugues 4 and 6 were too similar musically—both start slow, soft, and low, and get louder and faster as the pieces progress. He thus reversed the normal order.

By understanding German tempo indications, as well as the spirit and compositional style of each fugue, a performer can find a tempo that honors the effect Schumann desired in each movement. The most crucial element to finding the correct tempo is finding the right pulse. In slow movements, this is especially important. If the performer keeps a large pulse—for example two beats to a measure rather than four in fugues marked *Langsam*—then the music can flow properly. Although Bowyer plays the set faster than anyone else, his performance often seems slower because every beat is strong. By feeling larger units of time, a performer can find a tempo that keeps the movement flowing within larger beats, thus allowing him or her to manipulate time for expressive purposes.

Rubato in the *Six Fugues*

A second aspect of time in the *Six Fugues* is rubato. Tempo rubato, an Italian term meaning "stolen time," may be aptly defined as a disregard of certain notated properties of rhythm and tempo for the sake of expressive performance.[32]

Primary sources describing rubato mention stealing time in relation to tempo, dynamics, and structural points. In general, these sources advocate a steady tempo in fast

[32] Busby, Art. "Tempo rubato."

movements[33] and more freedom in slow ones.[34] Rubato could be affected by dynamics: a nineteenth-century performer might slow down during a crescendo within a single phrase.[35] On a larger scale within a movement, the musical public expected diminuendos to be slowed down and crescendos speeded up.[36] This idea is certainly different from the modern notion that tempo and dynamics are unrelated in performance.

Several writers explain how rubato might be used to project the structure of a composition. Lussy wrote about rubato within the structure of an individual phrase: that it is natural for a performer to take time before the climax of a phrase, and to take time at a cadence.[37] Moscheles, a famous piano virtuoso of the period, stated that time could be taken at cadences, pedal points, and in preludes.[38] Carl Czerny, an Austrian composer, teacher, and pianist of Czech origin, stated that a ritardando or rallentando is used at the following structural points:[39]

1. On the return to the principal subject
2. When a phrase is separated from the melody
3. On long notes that are strongly accented
4. In the transition to a new time signature
5. After a pause
6. On the diminuendo during a quick, lively passage
7. Where the ornamental notes cannot be played *a tempo giusto*
8. In a well-marked crescendo serving as the introduction or wind-up to an important passage
9. In passages where the composer or performer gives free play to his fancy
10. When the composer marks the passage *espressivo*
11. At the end of a trill or cadence

[33] Lussy, 163.
[34] Türk, 69.
[35] Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Beethoven Remembered*, trans. Frederick Noonan (Arlington: Great Ocean Publishers, 1987), 94.
[36] Brown, 384. He cites "J. Feski, *Caecilia*, 15 (1833), 270."
[37] Lussy, 163.
[38] Ignaz Moscheles, *24 Pianoforte Studies*, Op. 70 (Leipzig: H.A. Probst, 1827), 11.
[39] Carl Czerny, *Pianoforte School* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1895), 21.

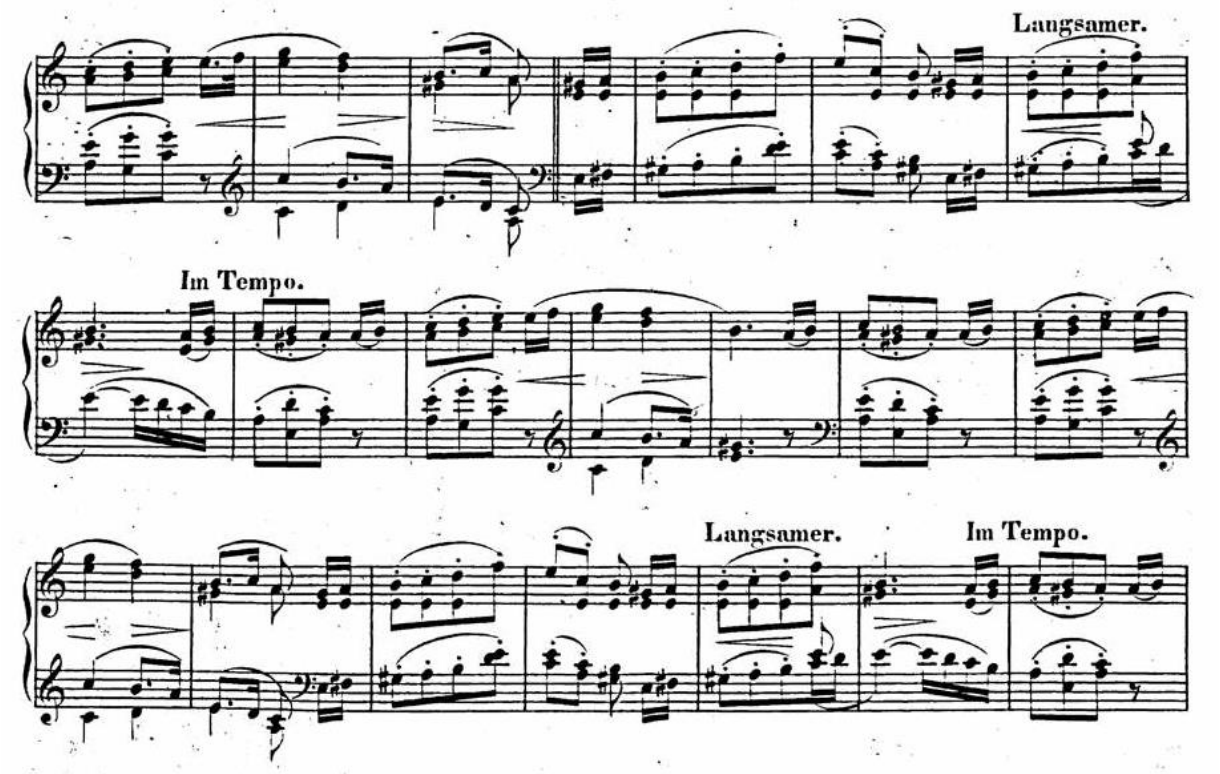
Finally, it is important to observe what Schumann and his inner circle thought about rubato. For these musicians, rubato was used to express one's feeling, and it allowed the performer to interpret a piece of music in his or her own individual way.[40] In general, their comments reflect the trends previously stated. Sources on this topic also include an article by Adelina de Lara (Clara Schumann'sstudent), the memoirs of Eugenie Schumann,[41] and various essays by Robert Schumann, including his *Musical House and Life Rules.*

The most relevant primary sources on rubato for the *Six Fugues* are perhaps Schumann's own indications in his piano cycle, *Album for the Young,* Op. 69. This is a set of pieces for young students, so he marked tempo changes to help them learn about the use of rubato. (The *Six Fugues,* on the other hand, are esoteric and intended for the most learned, advanced performers, so obviously he did not feel the need to give such precise indications in that work.) In the sixth movement of the *Album for the Young,* entitled "The Poor Orphan," Schumann indicates rubato in two identical passages. He asks for a crescendo and a slowing down of the tempo when approaching the high point of a phrase, marked each time as *Langsamer* (slower). See Example 4.

[40] Leopold Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing,* trans. Editha Knocker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 75.

[41] Eugenie Schumann, *The Schumanns and Johannes Brahms: The Memoirs of Eugenie Schumann,* trans. Marie Busch (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 171.

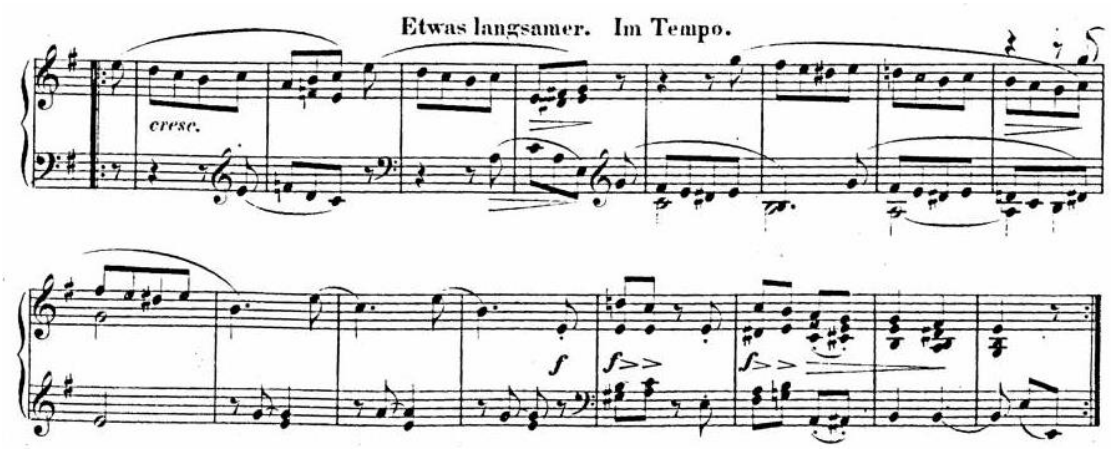
Example 4. Measures 6-26, movement six, *Album For the Young*



This change in tempo may be applied directly to the *Six Fugues*, especially in movements marked *Langsam*. One such application is in Example 2, where the right hand ascends to the high point of the phrase at the beginning of measure four.

The sixteenth movement of *Album for the Young* shows a different context for rubato. Example 5 is an excerpt from this piece; the title may be translated as "First Sorrow" or "First Loss."

Example 5. Measures 13-32, movement sixteen, *Album for the Young.*



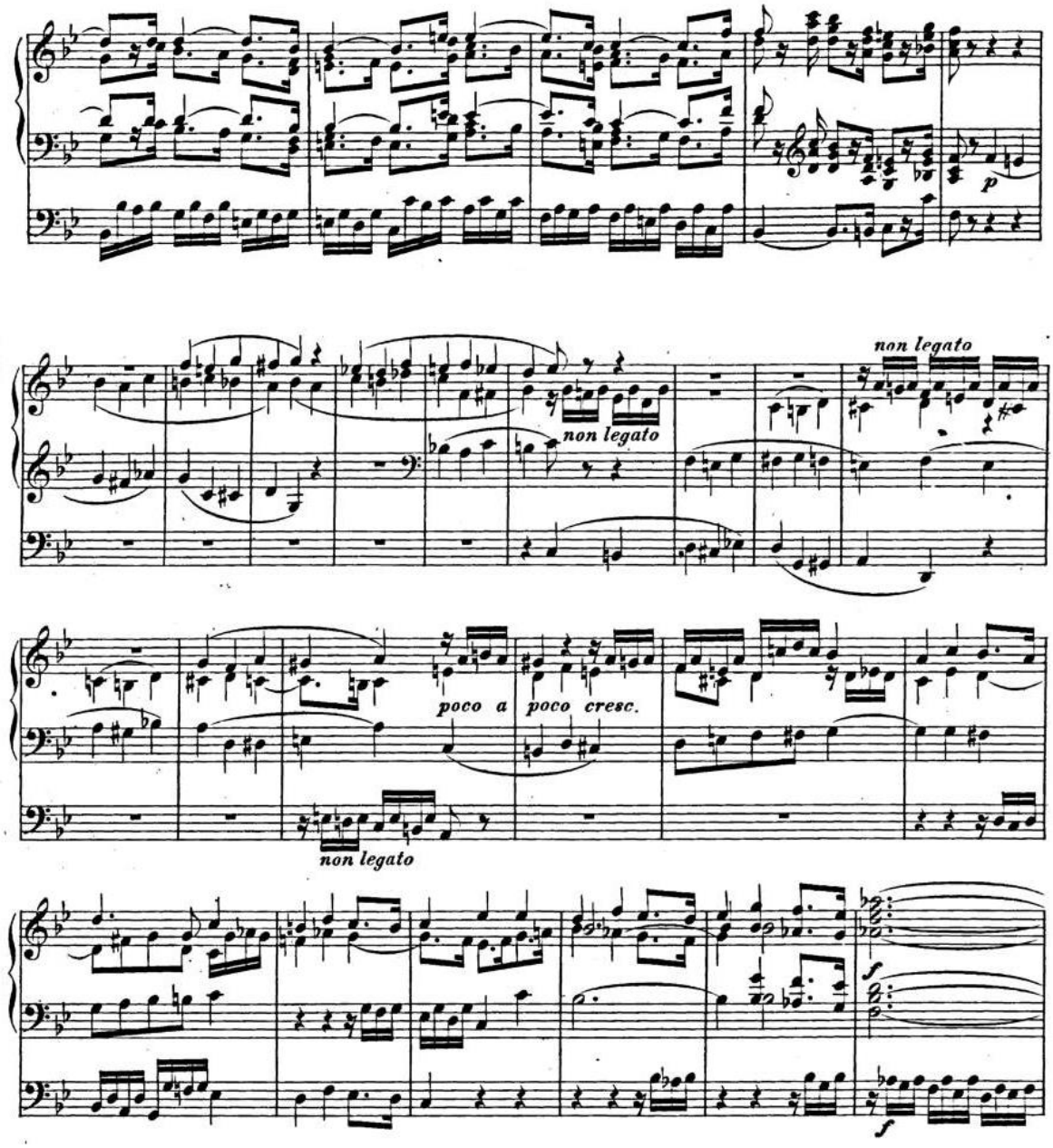
The excerpt starts at the B section of the piece. Schumann repeats a two-measure phrase, the second time with a surprising harmony. He indicates that the tempo must slow down at the repetition, no doubt for emphasis. This use of rubato may be applied quite readily to the *Six Fugues*. Often Schumann repeats the B-A-C-H theme, and in the *Langsam* movements he often reiterates other motives as well. In especially beautiful, re-harmonized melodies leading to new sections or ideas, this technique is particularly useful. It may be applied to Example 2, measures five and six, which recall the opening measures, but without repeating them verbatim. A sensitive artist can take time at such "repetitions." By transplanting tempo markings such as these from the A*lbum for the Young*, the performer of the *Six Fugues* can learn to use rubato at specific moments: the high points of phrases, special harmonies, chromatic passages, and repeated musical ideas.

By examining general primary sources on rubato from the time of Robert Schumann and applying the rubato markings used in the *Album for the Young* to similar moments in the *Six Fugues*, it is possible to bring out the form, harmony, melody, and rhythm of each

movement. One passage that needs special attention in this regard is in the second fugue, shown as Example 6. Schumann alternates not just between forte and piano, but also between sixteenths and quarters as the main note value, heterophony and polyphony, and non-legato and legato. Türk proposed that a somewhat slower tempo could be adopted for a tender, moving passage located between two lively, fiery ones.[42] In Example 6, it makes sense for the performer to slow down in the softer section (beginning at measure 75), and then artistically speed up as the movement becomes louder and more active.

[42] Türk, 69.

Example 6. Measures 71-97 of Fugue II from the *Six Fugues*



Lefebvre, Rothkopf, and Schmeding keep the same tempo between the loud and soft passages in this example. Bowyer actually speeds up through the soft, sustained passages. No one follows Türk's suggestion. Perhaps this is because most performers are taught to maintain the tempo when changing dynamics; for most trained musicians today, dynamics and tempo are not related to each other. This runs contrary, however, to information given in the primary written sources of Schumann's time.

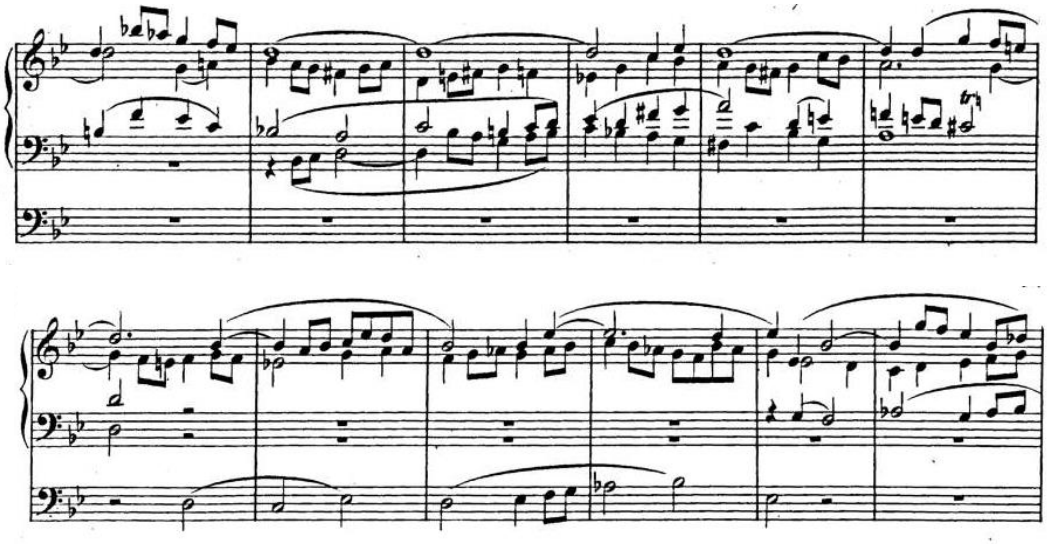
Another interesting passage for the study of rubato is given as Example 7. Several authors of primary texts offer comments that can be applied to this excerpt. Kalkbrenner indicated that performers should terminate all cantabile phrases with a ritardando,[43] slowing down more for a cadence and a little less for shorter phrases. Czerny instructs performers to slow down at a cadence involving a trill,[44] which can easily be applied to measure 30 of the example. Clara Schumann encouraged her students not to hurry over beautiful things, but linger and enjoy.[45] One beautiful moment is the passage from measure thirty to thirty-five, where the harmony moves from D minor to E-flat major. Another beautiful moment is at the eighth-note cantabile gesture at beats two and three of measure 25. The primary sources confirm Schumann's markings in the *Album for the Young*, which indicate slower tempi in similar passages.

[43] Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Méthode pour apprendre le piano-forte à l'aide du guide mains,* Op. 108 (Paris, 1831); trans. as *Complete Course of Instruction for the Piano Forte* (Philadelphia: Le Lee & Walker, ca. 1835), 12.

[44] Czerny, 29.

[45] Adelina de Lara, "Clara Schumann's Teaching," *Music and Letters* 26, no. 3 (1945): 146-7.

Example 7. Measures 25-36 of Fugue III from the *Six Fugues*

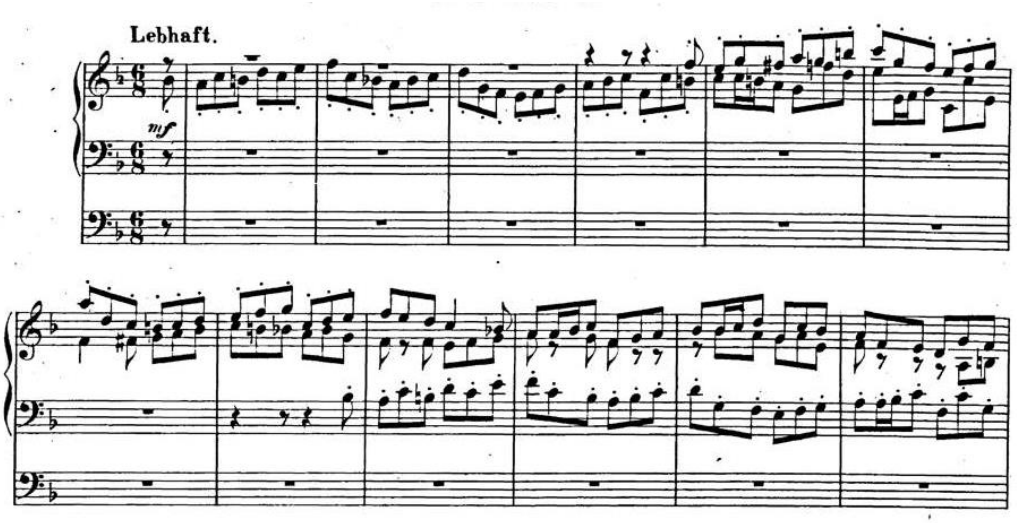


Perhaps the weakest recording of this fugue from an historical point of view is that of Lefebvre. His performance is the fastest and he uses almost no rubato. On the other hand, Bowyer takes such a slow tempo, with four pulses to the measure, that rubato is not discernible because each note is equally heavy and slow. Schmeding and Kee's recordings are similar in this regard. Every performer plays the piece with disregard for slurs as indications for long phrases. As a result, none uses as much rubato as would an historically-informed performer. Employing a larger unit as the pulse allows the player to take more time at structural points and places of beauty. The correct choice of an underlying tempo is the foundation for rubato.

Example 8 is the opening of the fifth fugue. Because this music is marked *Lebhaft*, much less rubato is needed. Robert Schumann stated that in fast movements musicians should "play in time, not like a virtuoso who sounds drunk, but to always play

energetically,"[46] Mathis Lussy indicated that "it seems natural to keep up a uniform rate, only slackening with the loss of power and impetus, or when there is an evident change of structure."[47] However, he also left allowance for expressive time-taking in fast movements when he stated, "There should be *accelerandos* and *ritardandos* according to every change of feeling, and whenever the expressive structure of the phrases, or their motion up or down seems to require them."[48] In this example, the subject ascends and then descends: energy is gained and then lost. The answer enters a fifth higher, thus with more energy. But when the third voice enters in the tenor, the first two descend to a lower range, at which time the energy is reduced. By following the contours of the voices and shaping the music as it rises and falls, a performer can employ subtle variations of tempo within the general confines of a steady beat.

Example 8. Measures 1-12 of Fugue V from the *Six Fugues*



[46] Robert Schumannn, *On Music and Musicans*, trans. Paul Rosenfeld and ed. Konrad Wolff (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1946), 30-37.

[47] Lussy, 163.

[48] Ibid., 163.

In Schmeding's recording of this fugue, the tempo sounds mechanical. The performance does not allow energy to increase or decrease when melodies rise and fall, as suggested by Lussy. Bowyer's performance is extremely fast, and in places very uneven, which goes against Schumann's decree to young musicians to play in time and not like a drunken virtuoso. Rothkopf's performance most resembles what is suggested by the primary sources. His performance is steady and he uses a large pulse, yet the tempo includes inflections according to the contours of the voices. The result is very successful.

Large-Scale Tempo Modification in the *Six Fugues*

A third and final consideration in this essay is tempo modification, of which very little has been written—primary or secondary. This innovation (mainly an invention of the New German School) seems to have been controversial in the nineteenth century. Schumann's large-scale tempo modifications might have been the prototype for future practices by Liszt and Wagner. Brown states:

> modification of the basic pulse of the music either momentarily or for a more extended period can occur in different ways and for dramatic, expressive or structural purposes. ... It can involve the adoption of a slower or faster basic tempo for a whole phrase or section, either abruptly or preceded by a ritardando or an accelerando. In such cases the change of speed can either be slight, and scarcely perceptible to the casual listener, or can result in the establishment of an unmistakably different tempo.[49]

[49] Brown, 378.

Discussions of tempo modification involving alteration of the pulse assumed some prominence in music journals and instruction books in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, suggesting that the appropriateness (or otherwise) of this expressive resource was very much a live issue at that time. All writers cautioned more or less for restraint. Friedrich Guthman states in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of 1804:

> The beat is the means by which we are so much the more freely and better able to express our feelings. It should not, however, inhibit us. ... Is it to be wondered at if, without himself being aware of it, he [the performer] gradually hurries or drags? Would it be right; would it make the proper effect if he did not do it? The sensitive musician will also, if he only to some extent understands his feelings and knows how to control them, rightly perceive, in the majority of cases, the places where he may deviate from the prescribed tempo-how much and for how long.[50]

The type of tempo modification in three of the six fugues might be best understood by examining primary sources concerning Wagner's tempo modification. Wagner's ideas, which are well documented, may have been based at least in part on the large-scale tempo modification of Schumann. But one wonders if Schumann's tempi were as extreme as Wagner's. The English organist and composer Henry Smart gave the following description of Wagner's tempi:

> Firstly he [Wagner] takes all quick movements faster than anybody else; secondly he takes all slow movements slower than anybody else; thirdly he prefaces the entry of an important point, or the return of a theme-especially in slow movement—by an exaggerated ritardando; and fourthly, he reduces the speed of an allegro—say in an overture or the first movement—fully one-third, immediately on the entrance of its cantabile phrases.[51]

[50] Friedrich Guthman, "Weber Abweichung von Takte," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 7 (1804-5): 347-9.

[51] Henry Smart, *Sunday Times*, 17 June 1855, 3.

From about the 1840s to the 1870s, Wagner's conducting was renowned throughout Europe in part because of his approach to time. He believed that flexibility of tempo was necessary for an appropriate interpretation of most music beginning with Beethoven. Wagner regarded each section of a movement as having its own appropriate tempo, and believed that the fundamental adagio in a lyrical melody should be emphasized. He believed that the character of music can change through the course of a movement, and that tempo should respond to these changes. Wagner called this tempo pliability the very life of music, which he, like Schumann, left to the creativity of the performer. Bowen, writing in 1993, states that "Wagner raises tempo modulation to a central concern, granting the performer creative jurisdiction over this key element of music. Although the performer may be introducing elements not specifically in the score, his guide is the unalterable spirit of the passage."[52] Wagner suggests that the modification of tempo should be continuous and imperceptible, as is the case in three of Schumann's *Six Fugues.*[53] Wagner believed in these ideas on tempo as a means to make instrumental music as dramatic and singing as vocal music. He stated that the key to these ideas, which he labeled *melos,* was to perceive melody as expressive song.[54]

Schumann may have intended a simultaneous increase in dynamics and tempi in three fugues because this practice was expected by musical audiences of the time. As Feski observed, the musical public "firmly believe a diminuendo must be slowed down and a crescendo speeded up; a tender phrase will be performed more slowly, a powerful one

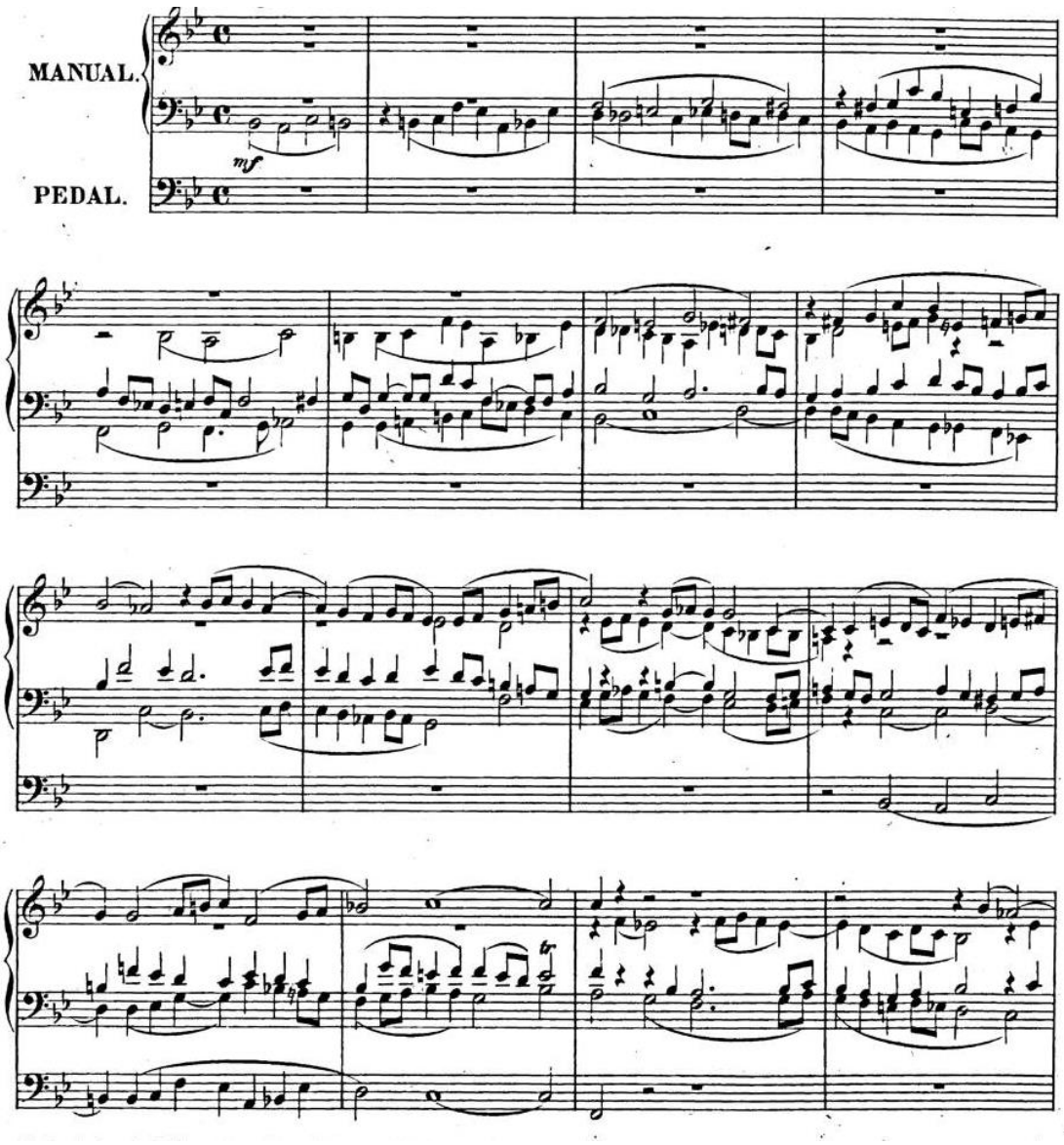
[52] José Antonio Bowen, "Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Wagner as Conductors: The Origins of the Ideal of 'Fidelity to the Composer,'" *Performance Practice Review* 6, no. 1 (Spring, Article 4, 1993): 87.
[53] Ibid., 87.
[54] Wagner, 167.

faster."[55] It seems that Schumann took this convention and then employed it on a much longer, larger scale than his contemporaries. Schumann also calls for large-scale tempo modifications in other works, such as the first movement of the Second Sonata, Op. 22. The first movement is marked *So rasch wie möglich* (as quickly as possible). When the key modulates toward the end of the piece, Schumann writes *schneller* (faster); at the coda he writes *noch schneller* (even faster).

A performer can refine the large-scale tempo modifications in the first, fourth, and sixth fugues through a consideration of notation, tempo markings, dynamic markings, touch, primary sources on rubato (discussed above), and Wagner's and Liszt's views on tempo modification. Example 9 shows the beginning of the first fugue. If a performer follows the contours of the music—as Lussy recommends—he or she will naturally employ rubato as a way to gain energy throughout the opening exposition. This is because the exposition starts soft, low, and fragmented, and then gains motion and energy with the entry of each new statement of the subject.

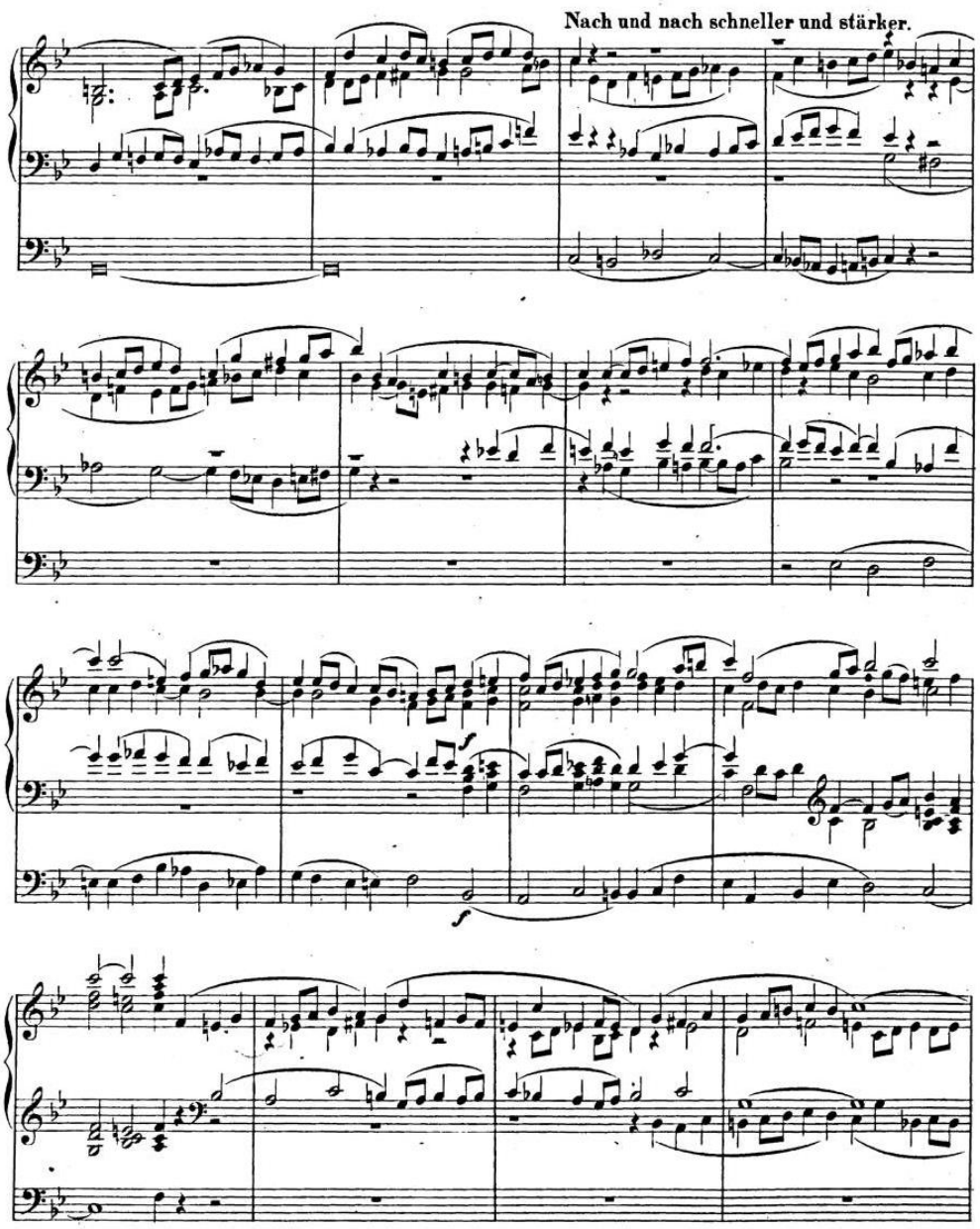
[55] Trans. in Brown, 384.

Example 9. Measures 1-16 (Exposition) of Fugue I from the *Six Fugues*



The beginning of this first fugue seems to have difficulty getting off the ground, and it only finds its pace by the end of the exposition. The increase in energy and momentum ultimately leads to the passage given as Example 10.

Example 10. Measures 32-47 of Fugue I from the *Six Fugues*



This example shows where most of the accelerando and crescendo happens in the movement. Since Schumann builds momentum by repeating material at higher and higher pitch levels, it makes sense to add stops and increase the tempo as the music ratchets up.

Schumann's fourth fugue is similar to the first: architecturally, texturally, and even in terms of registration and touch. In this fugue, Schumann does not ask specifically for a large-scale tempo modification. But we can imply this from his use of the same dynamic scheme as in the first fugue, starting soft and building throughout the movement. The ideas presented above can also be applied to the sixth fugue, where Schumann specially asks for a large-scale tempo modification, with specific tempo goals at various points in the piece.

Lefevbre employs almost no accelerandi in his recorded performance of these fugues. Bowyer includes some slight accelerandi in his, although he generally waits until after Schumann marks them in the score. In addition, his accelerandi are dramatically less noticeable than what an historically-informed performer would probably prefer today. Rothkopf does not do much in the way of large-scale tempo modification. In fact, he starts the fourth fugue quite quickly, almost at the tempo of the conclusion. Schmeding employs the most successful large-scale tempo modifications on the pedal piano. His large-scale tempo modification in the first fugue is quite extreme, starting very slowly and accelerating quite late in the work.

Conclusion

The chronology of the recordings analyzed in this essay reflects a growing interest in historically-informed performance practice of Romantic music. The earliest recording, by Lefebvre, was released on vinyl in 1976. His tempi are extreme, and he uses legato throughout in the French Romantic tradition, which is not appropriate to this music. The

organ and organ registrations are not well suited to the repertoire.[56] He incorporates almost no acceleration in the three movements that need large-scale tempo modification. Bowyer and Kee both recorded their versions in 1993. They also over-register the pieces and pick extreme tempi, although Bowyer does at least include some barely perceptible large-scale tempo modifications. In 2005, Schmeding recorded an excellent version on pedal piano, and he is aware of touch and timing. In 2010, Rothkopf recorded his version on an historic organ built by the Walker firm during Schumann's lifetime. His timing, touch, and registrations reflect the most historical perspective of the group.

The new, more historically-informed interpretation of the *Six Fugues* offered in this document is nevertheless quite different from all of these. This interpretation considers the fugues as a unified whole. Knowledge and application of what has been learned from primary sources encourages the interpreter to play a little slower in the fast movements and a little faster in the slow ones. And it encourages fewer accents per measure, resulting in a longer, more Romantic line. The new interpretation encourages more rubato in the slow movements and less in the faster ones. The performer needs a gradual and smooth accelerando through three of the fugues, starting a bit slower than most of the recordings, and pushing forward to a much faster conclusion.

Until now, relatively little research has been produced on time in early Romantic German organ works. But knowledge of this topic, which is intricately tied to organ registrations and articulation, is important for achieving expressive interpretations of these

[56] While the organ is not listed on the album information, it sounds as though Lefebvre is playing on a French Romantic organ, which are scaled more thickly than late German Baroque/early German Romantic organs Schumann would have known (organs by Hildebrandt and Silbermann). Lefebvre uses reeds more heavily than is possible on these earlier German instruments.

pieces. After all, Leopold Mozart stated "Time makes melody, therefore time is the soul of music. It does not only animate the same [music], but retains all the component parts thereof in their proper order."[57] A performer can only express himself in Robert Schumann's *Six Fugues on the Name Bach* through the use of proper tempi, rubato, and large-scale tempo modifications. It is hoped that the ideas expressed in this essay will help a new generation of organists perform this repertoire in a more exciting, expressive, and engaging manner.

[57]Mozart, 30.

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